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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1706
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4399
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2211
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2076
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 2647
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001355

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN AND NEA/IR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [IR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: IRAN 3, U.S. 0, SPORTSMANSHIP
PREVAILS

¶1. Embassy Ashgabat played the Iranian Embassy team on October 11 in a 30-minute soccer match during the first round of a diplomatic tournament organized by the Embassy of Kazakhstan. Team U.S.A. was made up of the DATT, RSO, GUNNY and 2 MSG, CAO, and a Nevada National Guard representative. We noted that the Iranian team was considerably younger; many of their players looked about 17 or 18 years old, likely the dependents of embassy staff. They also had a professional looking and sounding coach who shouted instructions to the players.

¶2. Although Iran ultimately prevailed 3 to 0, the atmosphere of friendliness and good sportsmanship dominated throughout the match. Several of our players noted how excited the Iranians seemed to be playing the U.S. team: The family members, who had sat off to the side during their first two matches in the morning, stood close to the field taking pictures as the two teams stood in line before their match. One player said they all seemed "almost giddy" about it. On several occasions, when players from either side tripped and fell, members of the opposing team helped them up. And when Team U.S.A.'s goalie (RSO) intercepted three goals in a row, the Iranian side cheered for him. Iran's ambassador, Mohammad-Reza Forqani, who also played, sided with the U.S. team's position when the referee mistakenly took five minutes away from the first period (the missing minutes were later reinstated).

¶3. At the conclusion, both sides shook hands, and as our team headed to the parking lot, a vehicle full of Iranian players and family members waved good-bye.

¶4. COMMENT: Few words were exchanged during the soccer match, but the atmospherics were hard to miss: It was clear that the Iranians were excited to be playing the U.S. And the U.S. team was happy to have kept our opponents to three goals.
END COMMENT.
CURRAN